

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
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News Release

RELEASE: IMMEDIATELY
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Golden Crab Final Rule Published; Fishermen Given 30 Days to Apply for Permits

Golden Crab fishermen are on notice that you have until September 26 to submit your application to the National Marine Fisheries Service for an initial golden crab vessel permit. The final rule to implement the Golden Crab Fishery Management Plan was published in the Federal Register on August 27, 1996.

To qualify for an initial vessel permit, the vessel owner must provide records documenting that the vessel landed golden crab harvested from the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone (from three to 200 nautical miles off the shores of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida), in quantities of at least 600 pounds in whole live weight by April 7, 1995 which is the control date for the fishery, or at least 2,500 pounds by September 1, 1995.

Vessel permit applicants must also select which of the three zones the vessel will fish in, and will only be allowed to fish for golden crab within that zone. The northern zone is from the NC-VA border to 28° N. latitude; the middle zone is from 28° N. latitude to 25° N. latitude; and the southern zone is from 25° N. latitude to the boundary between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils.

Other regulations included in the Golden Crab Fishery Management Plan include: (1) specify authorized gear for the fishery; (2) specify maximum allowable trap sizes; (3) require escape gaps and a degradable panel on each trap; (4) establish minimum depth limits for use of traps; (5) prohibit tending of traps by unauthorized individuals; (6) prohibit the sale of female golden crabs and limit retention of female crabs to not more than 0.5 percent, by number, of all golden crabs on board the vessel; (7) require that golden crabs be landed whole; (8) limit sale of golden crabs by permitted vessels to permitted golden crab

dealers; (9) require that permitted golden crab dealers purchase golden crabs caught in the EEZ only from permitted vessels; (10) prohibit possession of whole or gutted fish or fillets of snapper grouper species onboard a vessel fishing for or possessing golden crabs; (11) prohibit the issuance of new permits; and (12) restrict the transfer of vessel permits.

Vessel owners who reported golden crab landings under the Florida or South Carolina trip ticket systems and meet the landing requirements will be sent a federal permit application for golden crab. Those who do not meet the required landing history under the trip ticket systems must request a permit application from NMFS.

Those who fail to apply within this 30-day time limit will not receive an initial vessel permit. Permit applications should be sent to:

**Permits Branch, NMFS Southeast
Regional Office
9721 Executive Center Drive, North
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
(813) 570-5326**

A written request for consideration of an appeal must be submitted to the NMFS regional director within 30 days of his initial decision to deny permit issuance. Written documentation supporting the basis for the appeal must accompany the request.

For more information on permits, contact the National Marine Fisheries Service permits branch at (813) 570-5326. For more information on golden crab regulations contact the South Atlantic Council office or Dr. Peter J. Eldridge at NMFS (813) 570-5305.